

Science Siftings

By 'VOLT.'

The Elephant and Music.

In spite of his unwieldy size and apparently inactive ear, the elephant loves music. Not only does he learn to step in time, but he has been known to accompany the drum and flute with certain inarticulate sounds. Buffon once made a series of experiments to ascertain the musical taste of an elephant in the Jardin des Plantes. Simple melodies, played on the violin, seemed to give the beast great pleasure, whereas variations made apparently no impression. But when the horn-player played a popular tune the elephant became much excited, danced, and made an effort to accompany the music with grunts. At last he put his trunk into the open end of the instrument, as if to draw out the music itself, and then caressed the player most tenderly, to show him his gratitude.

Raising Vegetables on Sewage Lands.

France recently enacted a law making it a penal offence to raise edible vegetables on sewage disposal lands, because of the supposed danger of poisonous germs being carried and being introduced into the human system. Bacteriologists, having made a careful examination of the matter, declare the needlessness of this alarm. They have demonstrated that microbes do not enter the body of the vegetables under any circumstances, though it is possible for them to be entrained along the stem and leaves, but these locations do not favor their existence. Evidences of typhoid and cholera were negative, although a special search was made for such indications. The hardest germs only, such as tetanus, were found, and these are harmless when taken into the system through the stomach.

Sponge Farming.

Sponges are hereafter to be grown like corn or beans; or perhaps we should say like oysters, for the sponge is an animal organism. Experiments carried out in the Mediterranean show that the cultivation may be undertaken with great probability of success on the French coast, and it will not be confined to the shores of Tunis, as was feared when its possibilities were first discovered. Sponges from the opposite shores of the Mediterranean have been already carried to France and planted there, and we may expect that in years to come the sponge fisheries will be greatly extended by such methods. The investigations made on this subject recently have proved that sponges may multiply by fission, or division of substance, but that they also reproduce by means of larvæ issuing from the whole sponge, from pieces split off, or from the young sponges. Fragments of sponge transported to another locality heal in about three months and then begin to grow: irregular pieces soon become spherical and rapidly enlarge, adding 25 times their own volume in the course of four or five years. The growth, of course, is slow during the first year because of the necessity for healing the wound caused by tearing off the fragment from the main body for transplantation. The character of the spongy tissue appears to be somewhat altered by cultivation; the dark tint becomes much clearer and whiter. It is not yet known whether there is sufficient change to alter the commercial value of the product, either for the better or for the worse. All these observations have been carried on by two enthusiastic Frenchmen, Messrs. Dubois and Allemand-Martin, in their laboratory at Sfax, Tunisia. The result, we are told, is the creation of a science of 'spongiculture,' whose principles, if carried out on the lines laid down by its founders, will make fortunes for the diligent, not only in France, but in Tunis as well, the product being larger, better, and more easily gathered.

Nothing grieves the careful housewife more than to see her good furniture mishandled by careless carriers. If you have to shift, be wise and get a reliable firm like the NEW ZEALAND EXPRESS COMPANY to remove your things. They are very careful, and charge reasonably too. Their address is Bond street....

Intercolonial

The Sisters of Mercy at All Hallows' sustained a sad bereavement through the death of Sister M. Francis de Sales (Scally), says the *Brisbane Age*. The deceased nun had almost reached the golden jubilee of her novitiate, having been received in Ireland close on fifty years ago.

Rev. Father Grogan, of the Redemptorist Order, arrived in Brisbane the other day from Manila by the Japanese mail steamer. Father Grogan, who was en route to Perth, has been engaged in missionary work in the Philippine Islands for the past four years. By the same vessel also, Brother Bartholomew Lally, a lay member of the Order, was a passenger.

A boys' orphanage for the Sisters of Nazareth has been commenced at Sebastopol, in the diocese of Ballarat, where the nuns already conduct a home for the aged poor, and orphaned and neglected children. In connection with the new orphanage, which will be ready for occupation in twelve months' time, there will be a farm, where the lads will be taught practical agriculture; the land for this purpose having been donated by his Lordship Bishop Higgins.

News has been received in Sydney that Mrs. Dalton, widow of the late Hon. Thomas Dalton, K.C.S.G., died on board a steamer whilst on its way from Brisbane to Sydney. Mrs. Dalton had been on a health trip to China and Japan. She was a sister of the late Father Walsh, of Townsville, who was at the time of his death Vicar-General of the diocese of Rockhampton. Mrs. Dalton was always most generous to charities, and a leader in all movements having for their purpose the advancement of the Church.

By the will of the late Mr. Thomas Walsh, of Toowoomba (writes the Brisbane correspondent of the *Catholic Press*) bequests of £200 each have been made to the Sisters of Mercy at Toowoomba and Stanthorpe; St. John's School, Sydney; Gort, County Sligo, Ireland; Callan, County Kilkenny, Ireland; the Sisters of Charity, Ballaghaderin, County Mayo; St. Joseph's Union, New York; St. Mary's College, Rosebank, Sydney; the Deaf and Dumb Institution, Waratah, N.S.W.; the Lewisham Hospital, Sydney; the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Brisbane; St. Ann's Industrial School, Brisbane; the Nudgee Orphanage; the Magdalen Asylum, Woolloowin; and the Convent of Mercy, Stubberan, Ireland.

At the University Primary Examinations the Catholic schools have as usual done remarkably well, but it was at the Federal Public Service Examinations that the Christian Brothers' College scored (says the Melbourne correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal*). Two years ago their pupils swept the board at this examination, which is open to all candidates. In the recent test James Raymond O'Keeffe headed the list of successful pupils, with 2283 marks. He is from the North Melbourne College, conducted by the Christian Brothers. The Parade, and other of their schools did remarkably well. The Catholic colleges won 15 out of the first 20 places.

When his Grace the Archbishop made the appeal to the faithful of the diocese for funds to complete St. Virgil's College (says the *Tasmanian Monitor*), he announced to them in a letter, which was a touching tribute to his venerable predecessor, that the college would be the memorial to the late Archbishop. It was just the kind of memorial that Archbishop Murphy would have himself desired, for it was the work upon which he had set his heart, and to which he had devoted all the energies of his last years. No more fitting tribute, therefore, could have been paid to his memory. His Grace the Archbishop has just had placed on the recently completed wing a marble tablet commemorative of his predecessor's work in connection with St. Virgil's.

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